

Updated December 2019

Oral Wellness Newsletter

Hello everyone, here's an updated United Concordia Dental December Oral Wellness newsletter. Please share this version by using the "forward this email" button in the top corner. Or highlight a few selected articles, then copy and paste them wherever you like. Enjoy!



Jolly holiday tips

It's not that your dentist doesn't want to see you over the holidays, but an emergency visit could turn you into a grinch! Stay jolly with these tips for a mouth-healthy holiday season!

Go nuts! Almonds, cashews and walnuts are rich in fiber and vitamins, so they're healthy options for holiday party snacking. But remember, before you crack open those chestnuts with your chompers, nutcrackers were invented for a reason!

Be a wrap star. With all those presents to unwrap and assemble, you're bound to run into some frustrating packaging. Don't use your teeth as a substitute for scissors or pliers. You could end up with a cracked or fractured tooth or scraped enamel.

The holiday grind. The stress of the season can lead to grinding your teeth or jaw clenching – known as bruxism. This common condition can cause dental damage, facial pain, headaches and disturbed sleep if left untreated.[1] If you're having any of these issues, your dentist can offer ways to help manage your bruxism.

United Concordia members have access to one of the nation's largest networks of dentists. So if you do run into tooth troubles over the holidays, it's easy to find an in-network provider nearby.

Find a dentist near you



Healthy holiday peppermint mocha

'Tis the season for peppermint-flavored everything. From cookies to cocktails, nothing screams "Happy holidays!" more than this tingly chocolate-y treat.

While store-bought lattes can be full of artificial ingredients, sugar and calories, sipping this version will keep you off the naughty list. It's lower in calories and made with natural ingredients you can feel good about.

The essential oil derived from the herb peppermint (a cross between water mint and spearmint) is sometimes used for health purposes and thought to aid indigestion.[2] The flavanols in cacao powder, made by cold-pressing raw cacao beans, may have beneficial effects on heart health.[3] And stevia sweetens the mix with zero calories.

Get the recipe

The cold facts about cold medicine

Achoo! The season of sickness is upon us. With so many germs being passed around this time of year, you may find yourself turning to a bottle of cold or flu medicine. Before you dose, it's important to understand how these types of medicine can affect your teeth.

A spoonful of sugar? While it might help the medicine go down, the addition of ingredients like high fructose corn syrup and sucrose mean that liquid cold medicines are often full of sugar. Combined with the bacteria in your mouth, this can increase your risk for cavities.[4]

Pucker up. Cold medicine often includes citric acid, which can dissolve the enamel of your teeth. Some medications may also contain alcohol or antihistamines that can dry up the saliva needed to help protect your enamel.

Your teeth shouldn't be a barrier to taking the medication you need. But there are some steps you should take to limit the harm that syrups can do to your teeth.

[Learn about your options](#)

The cure for toothbrush cooties

Here's the dirty truth. Even after you're over a cold, the flu or strep throat, the germs that made you sick are still on your toothbrush. Though some sources tout ways to disinfect your toothbrush, not all methods are proven to be effective.

Trash your toothbrush after being sick

Make sure to replace your toothbrush with a new one. That way, you don't risk getting sick again. If you use an electric toothbrush, just replace the head.

Replace your toothbrush regularly

Even if you're healthy, the American Dental Association suggests replacing your toothbrush every 3-4 months, or sooner if the bristles are frayed. Keep a supply of extra ones on hand so it's easy to remember.

Proper toothbrush care

After brushing, rinse the bristles well with water to remove any toothpaste, then shake off the excess. Store your toothbrush standing up in the open air - and not touching another brush - so the bristles can dry out thoroughly.

No sharing, please

Sure, adults know better. But make sure the kids aren't grabbing for the wrong brush. Try color coding or writing each child's name on his or her brush to help prevent swapping bacteria.

[Learn more](#) about basic toothbrush care

Brrrrr, that hurts my teeth!

Do you wince when the winter wind hits your teeth? Or shudder when ice cream melts over your molars? You're not alone - about 40 million adults nationwide suffer from sensitive teeth at some point. And it's not just cold sensations that can send chills down your spine. Hot foods and liquids can also irritate sensitive teeth.

What causes tooth sensitivity? There's a layer of sensitive tissue called dentin just underneath the hard enamel of your teeth. When the protective enamel is worn away or eroded, your dentin is exposed. So anything hot or cold that touches your teeth can cause pain.

If you have prolonged sensitivity to temperature, talk to your dentist about possible treatments to eliminate your discomfort. Dentists have a range of options to help manage tooth sensitivity, including in-office treatments and products to use at home.

[Read what to do](#) if you have sensitive teeth

[1] [Teeth Grinding; American Dental Association; 2019.](#)

[2] [Peppermint Oil; National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health; 2019.](#)

[3] [Are there health benefits from chocolate?; American Heart Association; 2019.](#)

[4] [Diet and Dental Health; American Dental Association; 2019.](#)

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